

IDS 4930: Introduction to Gulf Studies(3 credits) Spring 2026

NOTE: This course complies with all UF academic policies. For information on those policies and for resources for students, please see UF's "[Academic Policies and Resources](#)" web page.

I. General Information

Class Meetings

- In person instruction
- Tuesdays: 10:40-11:30 (period 4) CSE E221, Thursdays: 10: 40-12:35 (period 4 & 5) WEIM 1076

Instructor

Prof. Becca Burton, MA Lecturer & UF Gulf Scholars Coordinator

Bob Graham Center for Public Service Pugh Hall, Room 220

Open office hours are in Pugh Hall room 231 (last door on the left in the Bob Graham Center suite) on Wednesdays: 2:00 – 3:30 p.m. and Thursdays: 1:30 – 3:00 p.m.

Email: rburton@ufl.edu

Phone: (352) 846-4723

In-class librarian

Patty Takacs, Political Science Librarian

George A. Smathers Libraries

Email: patriciatkacs@ufl.edu

Phone: (352) 273-2889

Course Description

Exploration of environmental, social, cultural, and economic challenges facing the Gulf region. Emphasis on applying design thinking to develop solutions that reflect community needs and promote sustainability. Focus on empathy, interdisciplinary collaboration, and real-world impact.

The word "resilience" means different things to different people, communities, and disciplines. Perhaps one of the simplest definitions of this word is positive adaptation despite adversity. **So,**

how can we address the environmental, economic, and social challenges of the Gulf region in a way that helps its communities become more resilient in the long term?

You've signed up for this class because you're passionate about making a positive impact on the Gulf and its communities. Maybe you're from the Gulf, or maybe you've seen firsthand the unique challenges the region faces. Whether you're interested in coastal conservation, community engagement, environmental stewardship, sustainable fisheries, disaster resilience, public health, tourism, or cultural preservation, this course is for you.

We'll dive into what resilience means in the Gulf, exploring how communities, ecosystems, and economies adapt and thrive in the face of challenges. This course takes an interdisciplinary approach, looking at the Gulf through the lenses of environmental science, public health, economics, public policy, and the humanities. You'll gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of the region and how different disciplines can offer solutions to its challenges.

We'll also introduce design thinking, a creative, practical problem-solving approach that puts human needs at the heart of the process. You'll learn how to use empathy and collaboration to design sustainable solutions to the Gulf's most pressing issues, drawing on both qualitative and quantitative data to inform your approach.

Whether you see yourself working in nonprofits, government, academia, or the private sector (or maybe you're still figuring it out—that's okay!), this course will help you develop the skills and knowledge to make a real difference. As you explore the Gulf's challenges, you'll build your critical thinking, communication, and analytical skills, all while connecting what you learn to your own personal and professional growth.

By the end of the course, you'll be ready to contribute to the Gulf's resilience, equipped with the tools to help shape its future in a meaningful way.

Optional Field Trip

We'll also have an optional field trip to Tampa on Saturday, February 21, 2026, where you'll have the chance to experience the place firsthand, meet community members, and explore how the stories we tell about the Gulf shape the solutions we imagine. More details to come.

Prerequisites

None.

General Education Designation: none.

Required Readings and Works

Course readings will consist of book chapters, scholarly articles, news articles, case studies, and other

online resources. They will be available through Canvas or through the [UF Libraries website](#). Required readings are listed on the course schedule below. If you need help navigating the library website, [tutorials are available here](#). From your computer, you will need to be on the [UF VPN Network](#).

Materials and Supplies Fees: n/a

II. Course Goals

Course Objectives

In this course we will:

- Explore what resilience means in the Gulf region across environmental, social, cultural, and economic dimensions.
- Examine the major challenges facing Gulf communities, from coastal change and public health to tourism, fisheries, and cultural heritage.
- Study the Gulf through an interdisciplinary lens, drawing from environmental science, public health, economics, policy, and the humanities.

Course Student Learning Outcomes

Content: *Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the discipline(s).*

- Identify, describe, and explain key themes, principles, and terminology; the history, theory, and/or methodologies used; and social institutions, structures, and processes. *Assessed through: class participation, weekly reading quizzes, weekly reflections, research reports, group design thinking project.*
- Demonstrate interdisciplinary understanding of the environmental, social, cultural, and economic challenges facing the Gulf region by synthesizing perspectives from multiple fields. *Assessed through: weekly reflections, weekly quizzes, research reports, Perusall assignments.*
- Identify, describe, and explain the cross-disciplinary dimensions of a pressing societal issue or challenge as represented by the social sciences and/or biophysical sciences incorporated into the course. *Assessed through: weekly reflections, research reports*

Critical Thinking: *Students carefully and logically analyze information from multiple perspectives and develop reasoned solutions to problems within the discipline(s).*

- Apply qualitative or quantitative analysis to evaluate how individuals and groups make decisions and assess the ethical dimensions of those decisions. *Assessed through: group design thinking project.*
- Analyze and evaluate the interrelationships between human activities and Gulf ecosystems within historical and contemporary contexts. *Assessed through: research reports, group design thinking project.*
- Demonstrate effective collaboration by contributing to a multidisciplinary team's efforts to research, analyze, and propose solutions to challenges in the Gulf region. *Assessed through: group design thinking project and peer evaluations.*

- Develop and propose strategies for community engagement in sustainable development and policy-making processes.

Assessed through: group design thinking project.

Communication: *Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline(s).*

- Communicate findings and recommendations clearly and persuasively in written, oral, and multimedia formats tailored to diverse audiences (e.g., peers, stakeholders, and policymakers).

Assessed through: research reports, group design thinking project presentations and final proposal.

Connection: *Students connect course content with meaningful critical reflection on their intellectual, personal, and professional development at UF and beyond.*

- Reflect critically on their intellectual and personal growth by identifying specific strengths and areas for further development related to complex societal challenges.

Assessed through: weekly and final reflections.

- Articulate connections between course content and potential career pathways in environmental science, policy, advocacy, community development, and related fields.

Assessed through: weekly and final reflections.

III. Graded Work

Description of Graded Work

In order to facilitate application of the class concepts, you will be asked to complete individual and team assignments. Specific assignments are listed below:

Assignment	Due Date
Attendance (5%)	Every class period; roll call
Participation (5%)	Every class period
Perusall Assignments (5%)	Various deadlines, noted in Canvas
Weekly Reflections (300-500 words) (10%)	Due on Sundays at 11:59 p.m. (for modules 1-7)
Weekly reading quizzes (10%)	Given in class on Thursdays each week
Three individual research reports (300-500 words, with citations) (20%)	Various deadlines, noted in weekly schedule and Canvas
Group Project Proposal Drafts (10%) <i>Your individual grade for each group assignment will be based 80% on the group's overall performance and 20% on your individual contributions, assessed through peer evaluations and instructor observation.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group project scope & design brief (due 3/10) • People & Research Plans (due 3/24) • Collaborative Data Synthesis (due 3/30) • Concept Development & Napkin Pitches (due 4/6)
Final Group Presentation (10%)	Due 4/15

Final Group Proposal (6-10 pages, double spaced) (20%)	Due 4/28
Final Course Reflection-individual (750-1,000 words) (5%)	Due 4/28

Individual work: Evaluated using specific rubrics for each assignment. These rubrics are included in this syllabus and will be made available on Canvas along with assignment descriptions and guidelines. If you are unsure about how a specific assignment will be evaluated, please do not hesitate to reach out. It is my goal to ensure transparency and purpose for all graded assignments.

Group work: Collaboration and teamwork are essential skills that you will develop and demonstrate through group assignments in this course. To ensure fairness and accountability, your individual grade for each group assignment will be based 80% on the group's overall performance and 20% on your individual contributions, assessed through peer evaluations and instructor observation:

- **Expectations for Contributions:** All group members are expected to contribute meaningfully to each assignment. This includes participating in group discussions, completing assigned tasks on time, and supporting the group's overall goals.
- **Peer Evaluations:** After each group assignment is submitted, you will complete an anonymous evaluation for each of your group members. These evaluations will assess the quality and consistency of their contributions.
- **Individual Accountability:** Consistently strong contributions will positively impact your grade. Insufficient or inconsistent participation may result in a lower individual grade, even if the group's overall performance is high.

This policy is designed to recognize and reward effort, support collaborative learning, and ensure all students are held accountable for their work. If challenges arise within your group, please address them early and communicate with me as needed.

Ethical Use of Artificial Intelligence

In this course, your original thinking and reflection are central to your success. Generative AI tools may be useful for brainstorming, outlining, or revising, but their use must support, not replace, your learning.

Unless otherwise noted in assignment guidelines:

- You may not submit writing or analysis generated entirely or substantially by AI as your own work.
- You may use AI tools to support your process (e.g., outlining, clarifying structure, or generating practice questions), but you must disclose how they were used. This can be done in a footnote, author's note, or comment in the assignment submission.
- All work must comply with the UF Student Honor Code. Any undisclosed or inappropriate use of AI may be considered academic misconduct.

We will discuss ethical AI use in class, and I encourage you to think critically about when and how these tools serve your growth as a writer, researcher, and collaborator.

If you are unsure whether a particular use is appropriate, please ask before submitting.

Grading Scale

For information on how UF assigns grade points, visit: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

Letter Grade	Number Grade
A	100-92.5
A-	92.4-89.5
B+	89.4-86.5
B	86.4-82.5
B-	82.4-79.5
C+	79.4-76.5
C	76.4-72.5
C-	72.4-69.5
D+	69.4-66.5
D	66.4-62.5
D-	62.4-59.5
E	59.4-0

Grading Rubric(s)

Class attendance and participation expectations:

A class like this requires careful attention to fairness and mutual respect for one another. Attendance and participation are graded separately and each counts for **5%** of your final grade.

You should attend all classes to receive full attendance. I will take roll at the beginning of each session. To receive full credit, you must arrive on time, stay for the full class, and avoid disrupting others. Excused absences will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis in line with [University of Florida attendance policies](#). While we are not a technology free classroom (see policy at the end of this syllabus), I do expect you to be an active participant in class discussion and reserve laptop or tablet use for group project time. During class please do not use your phone.

If you know you will miss class, contact me as early as possible. For unplanned emergencies, reach out as soon as conditions allow. Students with excused absences will be given reasonable opportunities to make up missed work. Unexcused absences will result in a deduction in your attendance score.

This course emphasizes active engagement with both the material and your classmates. Participation includes thoughtful contributions to discussion, active listening, collaborative group work, and overall attentiveness during class sessions.

You will receive a weekly participation grade, evaluated using the rubric below. Your participation score each week reflects the quality of your engagement during class sessions—whether through discussion, group activities, note-taking, or inquiry.

Important: Participation is only graded for class periods you attend. If you are absent (excused or unexcused), you will not be graded for that day and will simply have fewer opportunities to earn participation points. You will not be penalized twice for absences that are already reflected in your attendance grade.

All class sessions involve discussion of readings, videos, and real-world case studies. You are expected to:

- Share your own ideas clearly
- Respect the contributions of others
- Interpret and build on classmates' perspectives
- Support your points with evidence from course materials

High quality comments and questions possess one or more of the following attributes:

- Relevance: How is your comment/question related to the current discussion?
- Accuracy: Do you use terms and concepts in ways that are consistent with definitions provided in readings and lectures?
- Analysis: Can you explain the reasoning behind your comment/question using careful analysis?
- Integration: Does your comment/question move the discussion forward by building on previous contributions with new insights?
- Individuality: Does your comment/question contribute a new perspective to the discussion, or does it simply repeat what others have already said?
- Application: Does your comment/question apply the theory and concepts to real-world situations?

During the group project portion of the course, you will also be evaluated on your active engagement with your team. Each team will be responsible for developing agendas and working together toward your final project proposal. Being present and participating fully in group time will count toward your daily participation score.

Participation is assessed each class period based on your preparation, engagement, and attentiveness—whether through speaking, writing, active listening, or group activities.

We recognize that participation looks different for everyone. If you have concerns about in-class participation, please contact us early so we can work together to find the best way for you to engage.

Participation Rubric

	Excellent (8 points)	Good (7 points)	Average (6 points)	Insufficient (5 points)	Unsatisfactory (4-0 points)
--	-------------------------	--------------------	-----------------------	----------------------------	--------------------------------

Knowledgeable: Shows evidence of having done the assigned work.	Demonstrates a strong command of the material; clearly completed the readings/assignments and brings in specific details or examples.	Shows solid understanding of the assigned work with minor gaps; references most key ideas.	Shows basic familiarity with the material but relies on generalities rather than specifics.	Limited evidence of engagement with the assigned work; vague or incomplete understanding.	Little to no evidence of completing or understanding the assigned work.
Thoughtful: Evaluates carefully issues raised in assigned work.	Offers insightful, nuanced reflections; raises meaningful questions or connections that deepen the discussion.	Provides clear evaluation of issues with some independent thinking; shows good effort to engage ideas.	Shows some evaluation of issues but tends to summarize more than analyze.	Minimal evaluation; ideas may feel surface-level or underdeveloped.	No real evaluation; comments are off-topic, purely summary, or absent.
Considerate: Takes the perspective of others into account and listens attentively.	Consistently listens and responds respectfully; builds on others' ideas and fosters a supportive discussion environment.	Generally considerate and responsive; listens and engages with peers in a positive way.	Shows some awareness of others' perspectives but may not always respond or build on ideas.	Rarely acknowledges others' contributions; engagement feels limited or abrupt.	Disregards others' perspectives, interrupts, or does not participate.

Reflection Purpose & Rubric

Purpose:

This reflection will help you:

Synthesize strategies and ideas from the materials and class discussions from the past week.

Task:

Post your thoughts below. Your should be completed no later than 11:59 p.m. on the Sunday following the Module.

Think of this as a "journal" activity. Please answer one or more of the following in 300-500 words.

What was the most significant thing you learned this week, and why did it stand out to you?

How did this week's material connect to something you already knew, or how did it challenge your prior knowledge?

Describe an "aha" moment you experienced this week. What led to this realization?

How has your understanding of the course topic evolved this week?

In what ways can you see the concepts from this week being useful in real-world contexts?

What question(s) are you still left with after this week's material, and where might you go to find answers?

How can you apply something you learned this week to another course, activity, or personal project?

Criteria	Excellent (Full Credit)	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement
Engagement & Insight (4 points)	Demonstrates thoughtful, reflective engagement with the week's material; references class discussions or readings and shows personal insight.	Reflects on course content but may be surface-level or lack connection to class discussions.	Limited or unclear reflection; lacks engagement with course materials or ideas.
Response to Prompt (2 points)	Clearly answers at least one of the guiding questions with depth and relevance.	Attempts to respond to a guiding question but lacks clarity or depth.	Does not respond to a guiding question or response is vague.
Length & Clarity (2 points)	300–500 words; writing is organized, clear, and easy to follow.	Slightly under word count or has some unclear sections.	Significantly under word count or difficult to follow.
Peer Response (2 points)	Offers a meaningful comment on a peer's post that adds to the conversation.	Provides a short or general comment on a peer's post.	No peer response submitted.

Group Civic Action Project Description

As the central group assignment in this course, the Civic Action Project challenges you to apply the design thinking process to a real-world issue facing the Tampa Bay region. This project asks: How can we work collaboratively and creatively to address place-based challenges in ways that matter to people's daily lives?

A Civic Action Project is not just a traditional research paper or policy proposal. It's a dynamic, human-centered effort to design an actionable solution that could improve quality of life, promote resilience, or address a specific opportunity or challenge in a Gulf Coast community.

Your project may focus on topics such as:

- Water quality, springs protection, or ecological restoration
- Public health and access to care
- Economic opportunity and workforce development
- Youth engagement, tourism, or cultural heritage
- Climate resilience, housing, or disaster preparedness

You will explore these issues through research, collaborative synthesis, prototyping, and community-oriented thinking. While your project is hypothetical, it should be grounded in real data, stakeholder perspectives, and feasibility considerations. The outcome will be a proposal and prototype for a civic intervention such as a program, policy idea, campaign, toolkit, initiative, or resource.

You will move through the following stages of the design process:

- Framing the Problem (Scope + Design Brief)
- Planning Your Research (People & Research Plans)

- Synthesizing Findings (Collaborative Data Gallery)
- Developing Concepts (Concept Snapshots & Napkin Pitches)
- Testing Assumptions (Prototype & Shark Tank Pitch)
- Proposing a Solution (Final Proposal)

This project is collaborative by design, requiring active participation, flexibility, and creativity. It gives you the chance to work on real Gulf issues, build civic imagination, and practice interdisciplinary problem-solving, skills that will serve you in any career or community you engage with in the future.

Group Project Scope Purpose & Rubric

Purpose

The purpose of this assignment is to lay the foundation for your design thinking project by identifying a meaningful and actionable problem to address. This stage involves narrowing the focus of your work and setting clear boundaries for your project scope. This will ensure that your group's efforts are both targeted and impactful as you move through the design thinking process.

Through this assignment, you will:

- Refine a broad issue into a focused, solvable challenge
- Develop skills in scoping civic problems in real-world settings
- Align team interests with actionable community needs
- Prepare for the next stage: user research and insight gathering

Criteria	Excellent	Proficient	Needs Improvement	Points
Clarity of Problem Statement	Problem is clearly defined, relevant to the Tampa Bay region, and shows critical thinking about who is affected and why it matters	Problem is mostly clear and relevant, with some thoughtful context	Minimal critical thinking or understanding is demonstrated.	5
Defined Scope and Boundaries	Scope is realistic and well defined, with clear in/out of scope items and at least two meaningful constraints	Scope is included but may be vague or missing key constraints	Scope is confusing, too broad, or poorly aligned with the problem	5
Connection to Civic Action	Proposal shows strong alignment with a civic/community focus, with early ideas that show potential impact in Tampa Bay	Civic focus is present but not well developed	Weak or unclear civic connection	5

Organization and Submission Quality	Submission is well organized, error-free, and uses the template correctly	Mostly organized with few errors or minor formatting issues	Disorganized or difficult to follow; major formatting issues	5
--	---	---	--	---

Design Brief Purpose & Rubric

Purpose

Now that you've scoped your group's problem related to Tampa Bay, the next step is to draft a concise, actionable Design Brief. This brief serves as your project's compass, guiding your user research, concept development, and prototyping. This living document will serve as a guide for your project, helping you stay focused and aligned as your understanding of the problem evolves. I encourage you to keep a copy that all group members can comment on and make changes as you develop a better understanding of your problem.

This assignment helps your team:

- Align on the big picture of your civic action proposal
- Clarify for whom and with whom you're designing
- Articulate goals and learning questions to guide the next design steps
- Prepare for fieldwork, secondary research, and synthesis

Criteria	Excellent	Proficient	Needs Improvement	Points
Project Description	Clear, concise, locally relevant summary.	Mostly clear and relevant.	Vague, broad or missing context.	4
Scope & Constraints	Realistic, well-articulated, and relevant.	Present, but unclear or incomplete.	Unclear or missing detail.	4
Users & Stakeholders	Clear identification with strong rationale.	Present, but rationale unclear.	Vague or missing	4
Exploration Questions	3-5 specific, research-driven questions.	Some relevant but may lack depth.	Weak or missing questions.	4
Outcomes & Success Metrics	2+ specific, measurable, and relevant goals.	Goals included but vague.	Unclear or not measurable.	4

People and Research Plans Purpose & Rubric

Purpose

Now that your team has drafted a Civic Design Brief, it's time to figure out what you need to learn and how you'll learn it. This plan outlines how your group will gather meaningful data to better understand the Tampa Bay community and the civic challenge you're addressing.

Criteria	Excellent	Proficient	Needs Improvement	Points
Research Questions	3–4 strong, actionable, user-centered questions	Mostly clear but lack focus.	Vague or misaligned.	4
Existing Data Assessment	2–3 strong, relevant sources with clear rationale	Present, but rationale weak.	Minimal or unclear.	4
Primary Research Plan	Feasible, creative, and relevant strategy.	Included but lacks clarity.	Weak connection to user needs	4
Timeline and Roles	Clear, realistic, with roles assigned.	Present, but needs more detail.	Unclear or incomplete.	4
Connection to Project	Clear link to learning goals and design process.	Somewhat explained.	Weak or missing link.	4

Research Report Rubric

Purpose

Each of you will contribute to a class-wide research dossier about our focus community. These short, focused research reports will deepen our collective understanding of the place, people, and priorities shaping our work. Your reports will provide valuable context, evidence, and insights that guide the campaign design process.

Each student will submit three research reports across the semester, aligned with key phases of the project (What Is, What If, What Wows). These reports will help ensure that everyone is contributing as both a researcher and a designer.

Criteria	Excellent (5 to >4.0 pts)	Proficient 4 to >3.0 pts)	Needs Improvement (3 to >2.0 pts)	Minimal /Incomplete (2 to 0 points)	Points

Completeness & Organization	Report follows the template, includes all required sections, and is well-organized and easy to follow.	Report mostly follows the template but may be missing one component or have minor organizational issues.	Report is missing multiple sections or poorly organized, affecting clarity.	Report is incomplete or significantly off-topic.	5
Use of Sources	Uses at least 3 credible sources (including 1 primary). Sources are clearly integrated and support analysis.	Uses 2–3 credible sources, but integration or source quality may be uneven.	Uses fewer than 3 sources or includes questionable sources; limited integration.	No credible sources used.	5
Clarity & Writing Quality	Writing is clear, concise, and mostly free of grammar and spelling errors. Language is professional and readable.	Writing is generally clear but may contain a few distracting grammar or spelling errors.	Writing is unclear in places or frequently contains grammar and/or spelling errors.	Writing is difficult to follow due to significant errors or lack of clarity.	5
Depth of Insight	Report demonstrates strong engagement with the topic, thoughtful analysis, and relevance to course themes.	Report shows understanding of the topic but may lack depth or clear connection to course themes.	Lacks insight, reflection, or relevance to course.	Basic understanding is evident, but analysis is superficial or underdeveloped.	5
Citations & Formatting	Sources are cited consistently using a standard format (APA, MLA, or Chicago). Report meets page length and formatting guidelines.	Minor issues with citation style or formatting, but requirements are mostly met.	Major formatting issues or inconsistent citation style.	No citations or formatting does not meet expectations.	5

Total Score: ____/25

Collaborative Data Synthesis Rubric

Purpose

The purpose of this assignment is to synthesize the research your team has gathered to identify actionable insights that will guide your design process.

You will practice collaborative sense-making by analyzing patterns, connections, and themes within your data and presenting your findings in a structured, accessible format. This activity develops your ability to interpret qualitative data, work collaboratively, and generate insights that inform problem-solving.

Criteria	Excellent	Proficient	Needs Improvement	Points
Key findings and summary	20 to >16.0 pts Clear, complete, and well-organized. Includes highly relevant data, compelling visuals, and/or concise explanations.	16 to >12.0 pts Summaries are mostly clear and organized, with relevant data and some visuals or explanations.	12 to >0.0 pts Summaries are incomplete, unclear, or missing key elements like data, visuals, or relevance.	20
Observation and Note Taking	15 to >13.0 pts Thoughtful, specific, and insightful observations that demonstrate deep engagement with the data.	13 to >9.0 pts Observations are generally thoughtful and relevant but lack depth or specificity.	9 to >0.0 pts Observations are superficial, vague, or incomplete, showing limited engagement.	15
Clustering Process	15 to >13.0 pts Collaborative effort results in well-organized clusters with meaningful and clear labels.	13 to >9.0 pts Collaboration is evident but clusters or labels lack full clarity or consistency.	9 to >0.0 pts Limited collaboration, unclear clusters, or poorly labeled themes.	15
Insights Generation	20 to >16.0 pts Insights are actionable, clearly articulated, and strongly connected to the design challenge.	16 to >12.0 pts Insights are somewhat actionable and connected to the design challenge but lack depth or clarity.	12 to >0.0 pts Insights are vague, disconnected from the design challenge, or missing.	20
Report/Presentation	10 to >8.0 pts Includes all required elements. The writing is polished and reflective, with strong connections	8 to >6.0 pts Includes most required elements. The writing is clear but may lack polish or depth in reflection.	6 to >0.0 pts Missing required elements or unclear writing with minimal reflection.	10

	to the process and findings.			
--	------------------------------	--	--	--

Concept Development and Napkin Pitches Purpose & Rubric

Purpose

Now that your group has identified insights from your Tampa Bay research, it's time to develop potential solutions through a structured concepting process. This phase helps your team move from problem understanding to idea generation grounded in real needs.

This assignment helps your team:

- Translate insights into concrete civic ideas
- Practice iterative idea development and synthesis
- Prepare to prototype a meaningful solution grounded in user needs
- Strengthen your communication skills for presenting civic concepts

Criteria	Excellent	Proficient	Needs Improvement	Points
Brainstorm organization	Well-structured and thematic.	Present, but vague	Ideas are minimally organized; redundancies or gaps are unresolved.	4
Concept Snapshots	3–5 clear, complete, and relevant	Included but underdeveloped	Missing elements or confusing	4
Napkin pitches	Creative, clear, well-developed pitches	Present, but vague	Incomplete or unclear	4
Civic Relevance	Strong real-world potential and impact	Some relevance, but needs clarity	Lacks feasibility or relevance	4
Submission Quality	Organized, easy to follow.	Mostly clear	Disorganized	4

Final Presentation Rubric

Purpose

This assignment integrates the steps of surfacing key assumptions, developing a focused prototype, and preparing for a Shark Tank-style final presentation. By zeroing in on a single prototype, your group will

refine your concept into a compelling, testable solution that addresses critical assumptions and resonates with stakeholders.

Criteria	Excellent	Proficient	Needs Improvement	Points
Key Assumptions	Clearly articulated and relevant	Present but vague	Few or unclear assumptions; missing key categories.	4
Prototype Quality	Creative and clearly communicates the concept	Mostly clear but limited	Unclear or lacks connection	4
Civic Relevance	Strong understanding of impact and feasibility	Addresses impact but lacks depth	Weak connection to needs.	4
Pitch Content and Delivery	Engaging, persuasive, with clear visuals.	Basic structure with some clarity issues.	Disorganized delivery	4
Submission Quality	All materials organized and submitted.	Minor issues present.	Incomplete or unclear	4

Final Project Proposal Rubric

Purpose:

Your team has explored a challenge facing Tampa Bay communities, developed insights, surfaced assumptions, and prototyped a civic action concept. Now it's time to bring it all together in a final proposal that clearly articulates your group's design process, research, and solution.

This proposal will be your final product and roadmap—detailing why your project matters, how it works, and what steps are needed to move it forward.

Criteria	Excellent	Proficient	Needs Improvement	Points
Problem Framing	Clear, relevant and research based.	Relevant, but may lack depth	Vague or poorly contextualized	4
Research and Insights	Strong synthesis with clear connection to design	Included, but limited	Weak or disconnected	4
Assumptions and Testing	Clear, tested and aligned with goals	Present, but vague	Unclear or not tested	4
Solution Design	Feasible, well-rationalized concept	Present, but underdeveloped	Unclear or unrealistic	4
Final Reflection & Next Steps	Thoughtful and specific	Included but limited	Underdeveloped	4

IV. Annotated Weekly Schedule

Course Schedule:

Prior to Session 1. (class begins on Tuesday, January 13)

*Log on to Canvas and tour the course site, including the syllabus and grading policy. Be sure to also browse the Gulf Scholars website: <https://go.ufl.edu/gulfscholars>
Review the syllabus and come to the first class with one question or comment.*

MODULE 1: Our Home in the Gulf (Sessions 1 & 2)

Objectives:

- To understand the structure of the class and meet our collaborators for the semester.

- To learn more about the Gulf Scholars Program.
- To explore how our specific discipline is tied to many different challenges facing the Gulf.

Session 1: Welcome and Introductions (Tuesday, January 13)

Materials

- Course syllabus
- **Browse:** University of Florida. (n.d.). Gulf Scholars Program.
<https://go.ufl.edu/gulfscholars>

Other class preparation

- Generate two questions about the course syllabus.

Session 2: Deeper Exploration of Our Own Connection the Gulf (Thursday, January 15)

Materials

- **Read:** Davis, J. A. (2017). *The Gulf: The making of an American sea* (Prologue & Introduction). Liveright. (15 pages)
- **Watch:** University of Florida Gulf Scholars Program. (2024, September 11). *Our Gulf, Our Futures* [Video]. University of Florida.
https://www.youtube.com/live/9k7KythN3_0?feature=shared. (60 minutes)
- **Read:** McKinney, L. D., Shepherd, J. G., Wilson, C. A., Hogarth, W. T., Chanton, J., Murawski, S. A., Sandifer, P. A., Sutton, T., Yoskowitz, D., Wowk, K., Özgökmen, T. M., Joye, S. B., & Caffey, R. (2021). The Gulf of Mexico: An overview. *Oceanography*, 34(1), 30–43. <https://doi.org/10.5670/oceanog.2021.115> (13 pages)

Other class preparation

- Bring a photo or item that relates to your favorite Gulf memory.
- Find an environmental news story from your hometown and bring it in to discuss.

Assignment:

- **Module 1 Reflection (due by 11:59 p.m. on January 18)**

MODULE 2: Design Thinking for Community Action in the Gulf (Sessions 3,4)

Objectives:

- To understand how design thinking methodology can be applied to complex challenges.
- To understand how futures thinking can ease anxiety and lead to creative problem solving for the future.

Session 3: Introduction to Design/Futures Thinking (How Might this Relate to Community Action?) (Tuesday, January 20)

Materials

- **Watch:** Liedtka, J. (2020, November 12). *Jeanne Liedtka on Design Thinking: Journal of Business Venturing* [Video]. YouTube.
<https://youtu.be/s7LICHGEPuk?feature=shared> (20 minutes)

- **Read:** McGonigal, J. (2022). Chapter 6. In *Imaginable: How to see the future coming and be ready for anything—even things that seem impossible today*. Spiegel & Grau. (12 pages)
- **Select one structural force and one emerging trend to read and discuss:** National Intelligence Council. (2021). *Global trends 2040: A more contested world*. Office of the Director of National Intelligence. <https://www.dni.gov/index.php/gt2040-home> (10 pages)

Other class preparation

- Be prepared to share information about the Global Trends reports you read. You will be sharing these in small groups.

Session 4: Exploration of Community Action Case Studies & What does the data tell us about our chosen community? Field trip to McCarty Woods (Thursday, January 22)

Materials

Depending on your group, read assigned case study:

- **Group 1:** Paluska, M. (2022, February 18). *Cortez F.I.S.H. Preserve is a wild and fantastic holdout of an ever-developing coastline*. ABC Action News. <https://www.abcactionnews.com/news/region-sarasota-manatee/cortez-f-i-s-h-preserve-is-a-wild-and-fantastic-holdout-of-an-ever-developing-coastline> (2 pages)
- **Group 2:** Coalition of Immokalee Workers. (n.d.). *About us*. In *CIW-Online*. <https://ciw-online.org/about/> (2 pages)
- **Group 3:** University of Florida Biodiversity Institute. (n.d.). *McCarty Woods restoration*. In *Biodiversity@UF*. University of Florida. <https://biodiversity.research.ufl.edu/mccarty-woods-restoration.html> (2 pages)
- **Group 4:** Black Pensacola Residents Win Relocation From Escambia Wood Federal Superfund Site, 1992–1996.” (n.d.). *Global Nonviolent Action Database*. (1 page)

Everyone:

- **Read:** Wilson, D. (2005). *An Unreasonable Woman: A True Story of Shrimpers, Politicos, Polluters and the Fight for Seadrift, Texas*. In T. Bush & R. Goodman (Eds.), *The Gulf South: An Anthology of Environmental Writing* (pp. 178–191). University Press of Florida. (14 pages)
- **Watch:** Samuel Proctor Oral History Program and UF Gulf Scholars. (2024, November 10). *An oral history with Francine and Eddie Ishmael, Pensacola, Florida* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/li0aiaPeWDE> (75 minutes)

Other class preparation

- Come prepared to teach other students about your assigned case study.

Assignments

- Module 2 reflection (due at 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, January 25)
- Research Report #1 (due by 11:59 p.m. on Monday, January 26)

MODULE 3: The Gulf and Disasters (Sessions 5,6)

Objectives:

- To understand the many meanings of the term “resilience” and how it relates to the Gulf.
- To better understand what the characteristics and impacts of disasters.

Session 5: Guest Speaker: TBD (Tuesday, January 27)

Materials

- **Read:** Neufeld, J. (2010). *A.D.: New Orleans After the Deluge*. In T. Bush & R. Goodman (Eds.), *The Gulf South: An Anthology of Environmental Writing* (pp. 206–228). University Press of Florida. (23 pages)
- **Read:** Hurston, Z. N. (1937). *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. In T. Bush & R. Goodman (Eds.), *The Gulf South: An Anthology of Environmental Writing* (pp. 47–58). University Press of Florida. (12 pages)
- **Read:** Gessner, D. (2011). *The Tarball Chronicles: A Journey Beyond the Oiled Pelican*. In T. Bush & R. Goodman (Eds.), *The Gulf South: An Anthology of Environmental Writing* (pp. 256–268). University Press of Florida. (13 pages)

Other class preparation

- Come prepared with at least two questions for our guest speaker.

Session 6: Field trip to library to learn more about Clearwater/Tampa Bay region (Thursday, January 29)

Materials

- **Read:** d.school. (2016, September). *Design Project Guide* (pp. 5–12). Hasso Plattner Institute of Design, Stanford University. https://dschool.sfo3.digitaloceanspaces.com/documents/DESIGNPROJECTGUIDE-SEPT-2016-V3_2.pdf (8 pages)
- **Read:** Dam, R. F., & Siang, T. Y. (n.d.). *What is empathy and why is it so important in design thinking?* Interaction Design Foundation. <https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/article/design-thinking-getting-started-with-empathy> (5 pages)
-

Other class preparation

Assignments

- **Module 3 reflection (due at 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, February 1)**

MODULE 4: Culture Shapes the Gulf (Sessions 7,8)

Objectives:

- To learn about how the history and culture of the Gulf plays into where we are today.
- To understand the importance of history and storytelling in planning for our future.

Session 7: Guest Speaker: Anna Hamilton, Assistant Director, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program (Tuesday, February 3)

Materials

- **Read:** Hamilton, A., Brown, H., & Burton, R. (2022, October 3). *Island Impermanent*. The Marjorie. <https://themarjorie.org/island-impermanent/> (10 pages)
- **Read:** Ward, J. (2011). *Salvage the Bones*. In T. Bush & R. Goodman (Eds.), *The Gulf South: An Anthology of Environmental Writing* (pp. 239–255). University Press of Florida. (17 pages)
- **Watch:** Samuel Proctor Oral History Program and UF Gulf Scholars. (2024, June 14). *An oral history with Dixie Wilkinson, Pensacola, Florida* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5_luE6pczGc (60 minutes)

Other class preparation

- Come prepared with at least two questions for our guest speaker.

Session 8: Interview with Christina Package-Ward, NOAA Social Scientist (Thursday, February 5)

Materials

- **Read:** Davis, J. A. (2017). Chapter 9. In *The Gulf: The making of an American sea*. Liveright. (40 pages)
- **Read:** Yates, K. K., & Greening, H. (2017). Chapter 1: *An Introduction to Tampa Bay = In Integrating Science and Resource Management in Tampa Bay, Florida* (U.S. Geological Survey Circular 1348). U.S. Geological Survey. (16 pages)

Other class preparation

- Come prepared with at least two questions for our guest speaker.

Assignments

- Module 4 reflection (due at 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, February 8)
- Research Report #2 (due at 11:59 p.m. on Monday, February 9)

MODULE 5: Policy and Advocacy in the Gulf (Sessions 9,10)

Objectives:

- To understand relevant policy discussions related to energy transition, insurance, climate resilience, and affordable housing in the Gulf region.
- To learn how to access Policy Commons to find grey literature related to various Gulf challenges.

Session 9: Interview with Kelli O'Donnell, Fisheries Biologist, Southeast Regional Office/Sustainable Fisheries/Gulf Branch (Tuesday, February 10)

Materials

- **Read:** Jordan, S., & Benson, W. (2013). Governance and the Gulf of Mexico coast: How are current policies contributing to sustainability? *Sustainability*, 5(11), 4688–4705. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su5114688> (18 pages)

Other class preparation

- Pick a policy topic related to our location to explore more deeply during class. We will be participating in a hands-on tour of Policy Commons, a database accessible through UF Libraries.
- Come prepared with at least two questions for our guest speaker.

Session 10: Community Interview (TBD) & Tour of Policy Commons (Thursday, February 12)

Materials

- **Read:** Davis, J. A. (2017). Chapter 14. In *The Gulf: The making of an American sea*. Liveright. (36 pages)

Other class preparation

- Come prepared with questions for the interview.

Assignments

- **Module 5 reflection (due at 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, February 15)**

Module 6: The Environment Shapes the Gulf (Sessions 11,12)

Objectives:

- Understand the variety of environmental challenges facing the Gulf of Mexico.
- Analyze the impact of rising sea levels and environmental degradation on coastal communities.
- Learn about potential career paths for sustainable environmental management in the Gulf region.

Session 11: The Environment Shapes the Gulf (Tuesday, February 17)

Materials

- **Read pages 1-14:** National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling. (2011). *Deep water: The Gulf oil disaster and the future of offshore drilling* (pp. 1–14). U.S. Government Printing Office.
<https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc123527/> (14 pages)
- **Read:** Douglas, M. S. (1947). *The Everglades: River of Grass*. In T. Bush & R. Goodman (Eds.), *The Gulf South: An Anthology of Environmental Writing* (pp. 71–86). University Press of Florida. (16 pages)
- **Watch:** National Ocean Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. (2024, August 10). *Dead Zone in the Gulf of America* [Video]. YouTube.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qVh_V72mcPQ (5 minutes)

Other class preparation

- Come prepared with ideas for our interview guide.

Session 12: Interview with Kerry Walia, Tampa Bay Estuary Program (Thursday, February 19)

Materials

- **Browse:** Florida Sea Grant. (n.d.). *Home*. <https://www.flseagrant.org/>
- **Read Ch. 1:** Bunting-Howarth, K., Bacon, R. H., Balcom, N., Biggs, L., Fawcett, J. A., Liffmann, M., Pederson, J., Spranger, M., Showalter Otts, S., Focazio, P. C., & Kight, P. (Eds.). (2012). Chapter 1. In *Fundamentals of a Sea Grant Extension Program* (2nd ed., pp. 9–16). National Sea Grant College Program.
<https://caseagrant.ucsd.edu/sites/default/files/sgfundext.pdf> (8 pages)
- **Watch:** Green Jobs. (2019, July 16). *12 environmental career paths for non-scientists* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GfpULQZL3tk> (20 minutes)

Assignments

- **Module 6 reflection (due at 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, February 22)**
- **Research report #3 (due at 11:59 p.m. on Monday, February 23)**

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21: Optional field trip to somewhere in Tampa region.

Module 7: The Gulf and Public Health (Sessions 13,14)

Objectives:

- To understand the public and community health challenges in the Gulf region.
- To learn more about social determinants of health/and careers in public health.
- To learn where to find relevant and timely public health information in your region.

Session 13: What is Public Health? (Tuesday, February 24)

Materials

- **Read:** Lerner, S. (2005). *Diamond: A Struggle for Environmental Justice in Louisiana's Chemical Corridor*. In T. Bush & R. Goodman (Eds.), *The Gulf South: An Anthology of Environmental Writing* (pp. 173–177). University Press of Florida. (5 pages)
- **Read:** Sandifer, P. A., Ferguson, A., Finucane, M. L., Partyka, M., Solo-Gabriele, H. M., Walker, A. H., Wowk, K., Caffey, R., & Yoskowitz, D. (2021). Human health and socioeconomic effects of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. *Oceanography*, 34(1), 174–191. <https://doi.org/10.5670/oceanog.2021.125> (18 pages)
-

Session 14: Interview with TBD (Thursday, February 26)

Materials

- **Read pp 251-262 from:** Liedtka, J., Salzman, R., & Azer, D. (2017). *Design thinking for the greater good: Innovation in the social sector*. Columbia Business School Publishing.
- **Read:** d.school. (2016, September). *Design Project Guide* (pp. 13–24). Hasso Plattner Institute of Design, Stanford University. https://dschool.sfo3.digitaloceanspaces.com/documents/DESIGNPROJECTGUIDE-SEPT-2016-V3_2.pdf (12 pages)

Other class preparation

- Begin filling out the field book individually to be prepared for group work on March 5.

Assignments

- **Module 7 reflection (due at 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, March 1)**

Module 8: Brainstorming and Scoping Your Project (Sessions 15,16)

Objectives:

- To begin deciding the challenge you and your team will focus on for your project proposal.
- To learn how to develop a compelling problem statement and scope of work.

Session 15: Whole class brainstorm based on our insights (Tuesday, March 3)

Materials

- **Read:** d.school. (2016, September). *Design Project Guide* (pp. 25–36). Hasso Plattner Institute of Design, Stanford University.

https://dschool.sfo3.digitaloceanspaces.com/documents/DESIGNPROJECTGUIDE-SEPT-2016-V3_2.pdf (12 pages)

- **Read:** Christiano, A., & Neimand, A. (2017). Stop raising awareness already. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 15(2), 34–39.

https://ssir.org/articles/entry/stop_raising_awareness_alreadyS (5 pages)

Session 16: Scoping your Problem (Thursday, March 5)

Materials

- **Read pp. 1-13 from:** Liedtka, J., Ogilvie, T., & Brozenske, R. (2013). *The designing for growth field book: A step-by-step project guide*. Columbia Business School Publishing.

Assignments

- **Group Project Scope & Design Brief & peer/self-evaluation (due at 11:59 p.m. on Tuesday, March 10)**

Module 9: Resilience for All & Research Plans (Sessions 17,18)

Objectives:

- To begin to craft your research plans.

Session 17: Guest Speaker: TBD (Tuesday, March 10)

Materials

- **Listen:** Cause & Purpose. (2023, August 1). *Building a Resilient Future for All: Infrastructure Predevelopment with Shalini Vajjhala* [Audio podcast]. Cause & Purpose Podcast. <https://www.causeandpurpose.org/podcast/building-a-resilient-future-for-all-predevelopment-with-shalini-vajjhala> (1 hr 3 min)

Other class preparation

- Come prepared with questions for guest speaker.

Session 18: Design Brief and Research Plans (Thursday, March 12)

Materials

- **Read pp. 14-19 from:** Liedtka, J., Ogilvie, T., & Brozenske, R. (2013). *The designing for growth field book: A step-by-step project guide*. Columbia Business School Publishing.

Assignments

- **People and Research Plan, and peer/self-evaluation (due at 11:59 p.m. on Tuesday, March 24)**

SPRING BREAK: March 14-22

Module 10: Identify Insights (Sessions 19,20)

Objectives:

- To start to analyze your research so far.
- To learn more about community action through case studies.

Session 19: Case Study: Coalition of Immokalee Workers (Tuesday, March 24)

Materials

- **Read:** Zinn Education Project. (n.d.). *Coalition of Immokalee Workers*. Zinn Education Project. <https://www.zinnedproject.org/materials/coalition-of-immokalee-workers/> 1 page)

Session 20: Identify Research Insights (Thursday, March 26) NO CLASS TODAY (Gulf Scholars Conference)

Materials

- **Read pp. 20-23 from:** Liedtka, J., Ogilvie, T., & Brozenske, R. (2013). *The designing for growth field book: A step-by-step project guide*. Columbia Business School Publishing.

Assignments

- Collaborative Data Synthesis and peer/self-evaluation (due 11:59 p.m. on Monday, March 30)

Module 11: Design Criteria & Brainstorm Ideas (Sessions 21,22)

Objectives:

- To engage in a group brainstorming activity and begin to finalize our project ideas.

Session 21: Brainstorming (Tuesday, March 31)

Materials

- **Read pp. 24-27 from:** Liedtka, J., Ogilvie, T., & Brozenske, R. (2013). *The designing for growth*
- **Read chapter 4 from:** McGonigal, J. (2022). *Imaginable: How to see the future coming and be ready for anything—even things that seem impossible*. Spiegel & Grau. (20 pages)

Other class preparation

- Come prepared with a list of 10 undisputable facts related to your project topic. We will be flipping these for our in class brainstorming.

Session 22: Develop Concepts/Napkin Pitches (Thursday, April 2)

Materials

- **Read pp. 28-31 from:** Liedtka, J., Ogilvie, T., & Brozenske, R. (2013). *The designing for growth field book: A step-by-step project guide*. Columbia Business School Publishing.

Assignments

- Concept Development & Napkin Pitches and peer/self-evaluation (due 11:59 p.m. on Monday, April 6)

Module 12: Prototyping and Testing Assumptions (Session 23, 24, 25)

Objectives:

To begin to solidify ideas in our group, refine concepts and receive peer feedback.

Session 23: Prototyping (Tuesday, April 7)

Materials:

- **Read:** d.school. (2016, September). *Design Project Guide* (pp. 37-44). Hasso Plattner Institute of Design, Stanford University.
https://dschool.sfo3.digitaloceanspaces.com/documents/DESIGNPROJECTGUIDE-SEPT-2016-V3_2.pdf (7 pages)

Other class preparation

- Continue to work on your group project.

Session 24: Group work on prototypes (Thursday, April 9)

Other class preparation

- Come prepared with an agenda to keep your group on task
- Come prepared to share prototypes to share for early feedback with other groups.

Session 25: Group work on presentation (Tuesday, April 14)

Other class preparation

- Use this time to continue to work on your project and presentation.

Assignments

- **Final presentation and peer/self-evaluation (due noon on Wednesday, April 15)**

Module 13: Presentations & Peer Feedback (Session 26,27)

Objectives:

- You did it! Time to share your ideas!

Session 26 & 27: Final Presentations with Peer Feedback (Thursday, April 16 and Tuesday, April 21)

Other class preparation

- Be ready to present!

Assignments

- **Final proposal, reflection and peer/self-evaluation (due 11:59 p.m. on Tuesday, April 28)**

V. Procedure for Conflict Resolution

Any classroom issues, disagreements or grade disputes should be discussed first between the instructor and the student. If the problem cannot be resolved, please contact Marianne Vernetson, Graham Center Interim Director (mvernetson@ufl.edu, (352) 846-1575). Be prepared to provide documentation of the problem, as well as all graded materials for the semester. Issues that cannot be resolved departmentally will be referred to the University Ombuds Office

(<http://www.ombuds.ufl.edu>; 352-392-1308) or the Dean of Students Office
(<http://www.dso.ufl.edu>; 352-392-1261).